

ment: and in this lower creation all come into existence, are sustained in their existence, and complete in an appointed time, the whole of their existence, whether short or long. His goodness and care are plainly seen in his providence. He causes his sun to shine and dissolve the impervious barriers of winter: the clouds at his command send down their watery stores; he calls forth the spring in all its rich variety, and pours the horn of plenty within the lap of nature. He calls forth the seasons in all their mingled majesty, dress his works in all the luxury of elegance, unlock the springs of fruitfulness, covers the cultivated soil with "golden grain," and cause the mountains to sing, and the little hills to rejoice on every side. Mankind, and all creation, seem to be invited to the general feast. He also manages the elements to the advantage of his creatures. The lightning shoot, and the thunder roll, to purify the air, that man may not breathe his bane, nor imbibe his own destruction. He neutralizes the rigour of pitiless severity, and tempers the wind to the shorn lamb. He is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. Man is placed in the centre of his treasures, while nature smiles around him, courts his friendship, and invites his aiding hand. That God has also furnished man with the means of improving his moral condition, wherever his word is diffused, there can be little doubt; but that in his general benevolence he should offer spiritual blessings to all mankind, and urge them to accept the same, when those blessings are not adapted to people in a state of nature, for which they have no relish, which they dislike even to aversion, and which they have no capacity to receive, is very much unlike his wisdom and usual discrimination.

If spiritual mercies are involved, so are his gracious operations in the soul. For believers are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus. Eph. ii. 20. They are formed for himself in order to shew forth his praise. Isa. xliii. 21. And we most joyfully subscribe to the truth, that he will not forsake the work of his own hands: but that he will cover them with the shadow of his wings, hide them in his secret chambers, and watch

over them night and day lest any hurt them. No enemy shall ever crush his work; no foe shall break his sceptre. To such characters, spiritual blessings are admirably adapted, immutably promised, richly *given*, and gratefully received. He has promised to supply their needs, has invited them to a throne of grace, falls upon them like dew upon the pasturage, and like showers that water the earth. The young lions *may* lack, and suffer hunger, but they that fear the Lord shall not lack any good thing. He will guide them by his counsel while here on earth, and afterward receive them to glory. From these remarks it will be seen, that the passage *offers* no support nor countenance to the system of offered grace. To apprehend truth in our researches, nothing more is necessary than to study things in their respective relations. If we invert their order, or derange their connexions, we are sure to be involved in a labyrinth.

Isaiah lv. 1. "*Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price.*"

This passage is considered as a decisive proof of general invitations and offered grace. We are often told nothing can be clearer, no truth can be plainer. Mr. Fuller observes, no man is bound to believe the scriptures till he has had an opportunity of examining them; and if so, I think every person must be at liberty to withhold his assent from any human explanation, untill he has an opportunity of examining that interpretation, and judging for himself. No scripture is of private interpretation, nor ought any person to urge his ideas upon another, when they are not attended with sufficient evidence. To do this, is to plead for infallibility, stop the flow of free opinion, destroy the right of private judgment, and throw us at once into the bosom of the Romish hierarchy. Every individual is at liberty to question and examine the opinions of others; and at liberty either to receive or reject them. Believing these things, and calling no man master, I venture to insti-

tute an enquiry into the passage, in order to judge for myself; and leave other people to follow my example, should they feel disposed.

I observe, *FIRST, this passage cannot contain a general invitation, because it is couched in LIMITED terms.* The characteristicness of the invitation proves it to be far from universal. And how any thing peculiar to a certain character, can be adapted to general purposes, seem to require a universal capacity to comprehend.

2. *It cannot be understood literally, because no one can offer money to God.* There are few people, I presume, so ignorant as to think thus. Beside, the silver and the gold is his, and the cattle upon a thousand hills.

3. *It cannot be understood PROPERLY, because no EQUIVALENT can be rendered for a spiritual interest in Christ.* It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. The gold and the chrystal cannot equal it: and the *exchange* of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold. No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls, for its worth is above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold. Job xxviii. 15—19. And we are assured, in language the most decided, that the Lord taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man, Ps. cxlvii. 10. Solomon found after he had sifted things very minutely, that the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise; nor yet riches to men of understanding; nor yet favour to men of skill. Eccles. ix. 11. And we are informed in terms the most unequivocal, by a greater than Solomon, that it is not of him that *willeth*, nor of him that *runneth*, but of God that *sheweth*, (*not offereth*) mercy; Rom. ix. 16. So far is man from rendering an equivalent for covenant blessings, that they are dispensed without any reference to creature worthiness whatever.

4. *Such a commercial idea as the text exhibits, can only be understood in a figurative and qualified sense.*

The idea of *buying*, can only be intended to represent that *exchange* which is generally the consequence of mercantile transactions. The sinner who finds himself poor, and miserable, and naked, parts with his poverty that he may inherit substance; that he may suck of the abundance of the seas, and of treasures hid in the sand. His own misery is exchanged for God's mercy; and for his filthy rags he receives a covering of honour well adapted for glory and defence. He receives the white stone, and the new name, which the mouth of the Lord doth name. And thus become a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of his God; no more to be termed forsaken and desolate, but to be called Hephzibah, and his land Beulah. He exchanges all his worthlessness, vileness, and emptiness, for the merit, worthiness, and fulness of Christ Jesus. Nothing can be better suited to his case, nor be more reviving to his fainting spirit, than the freeness of everlasting things—the person and fulness of God with us. To call his own, this pearl of price immense, he parts with all that once was near and dear to him—his self-righteousness, his supposed excellencies, his worldly companions, interest, and celebrity. He forgets his own people, and his father's house, and worships Jehovah as the Lord his God. What things were considered gain to him, he reckons as lost for Christ; and is willing to count all things but lost, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord; for whom he willingly suffers the loss of all things, and do count them but *dung*, that he may win Christ, and be found in him, not having his own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God through faith: that he may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his suffering, being made conformable to his death. He parts with all to enjoy a crucified Christ in his relations and work. May the reader through grace go and do likewise. Thus far there is no appearance of a general invitation, or offered mercy.

The next thing of importance is, *was the character*

described, godly or ungodly. It seems not a little surprising, that God should describe a class of persons in such a perplexing manner, as to be entirely unintelligible. For my own part, I must confess, that I can see no reason to conclude that they were ungodly persons; but there are several reasons, which induce me to think they were spiritual individuals. Whether my reasons are conclusive or not, shall now be submitted to the judgment of the just.

1. *It is evident that the whole of the chapter is not addressed to sinners, because ver. 5 is addressed to the Captain of our salvation.* This seems to me very plain from the preceding verse, wherein he is styled the *witness, the leader, and the commander of the people.* And in the verse just noticed, is pointed out the conquest of the cross, the triumphs of truth, and the granteurs of grace.

2. *The style and address is manifestly varied.* It is partly *exhortative, partly predictive, partly descriptive, and partly illustrative.* The first four verses are an address to the gentiles in gospel times. The fifth is directed to the Messiah, and in prophetic style points out the glory of his kingdom and reign. The sixth is directed to his professing people the Jews. The seventh points out the conversion of the gentiles in the acceptable time and day of salvation; including the conversion of the Jews with the fulness of the gentiles, when the deliverer should come out of Sion, and turn away ungodliness from Jacob, that there might be one fold, and one shepherd; and thus both Jew and gentile be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation. Verses eighth and ninth, describe the vast difference between Jewish and divine thoughts. Verses tenth and eleventh, illustrate the mysterious subject. A subject too profound for the capacious Paul, which made him exclaim, "O the depth both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his ways, and his judgments past finding out." Verse twelfth is the application of that part which still belongs to the Jews: and represents their future prosperity, peace and comfort, in the land of Palestine.

3. *The form in which ver. 6 and 7, may be construed.* In the sixth verse the substantive *while*, may be exchanged for the adjective *where*: the passage denoting *place*, rather than *time*. Dr. Gill suggests the same thought in his commentary on the chapter, and referring to a marginal note observes, “so in the Jerusalem Talmud, as quoted by Abendana on the place. “*Seek the Lord where he is to be found, in the synagogues and in the schools.*” And so another Jewish writer, mentioned by him, interprets the words, “*whilst his Shekinah is found in the sanctuary; before he hides his face, and causes his Shekinah to remove from you.*” This was the sense entertained by that celebrated rabbi, *Abraham Aben Ezra*, a Spanish Jew, and who flourished about the middle of the seventeenth century. This proves, that the Jews considered the passage as referring to temple worship; and circumstances seem very much to favour this sense. For it is well known that Jerusalem was the *place*, where men in ancient days ought to worship; there the Shekinah dwelt, and there the God of Israel manifested himself to his chosen tribes. The promise of meeting with two or three in *any* place, is peculiar to the gospel dispensation, and adapted to elevate the present above the past.

Previous to this, the Jews had their dispersion, persecutions, and privations distinctly pointed out by Hosea, in the following descriptive language.—“*For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim.*” Hosea iii. 6. This prophecy suggested the entire overthrow of their political affairs, the abolition of their morning and evening sacrifices, the deprivation of the private means of enquiring into future events, together with the termination of the priesthood, and the loss of Urim and Thummim. The prophet seems to press upon their notice the importance of temple worship, and urgeth them to embrace the advantages which their laws and their religion afforded. But an exhortation to external duties or privileges, cannot by

just consequence support the idea of general invitations and offered mercy.

Verse 7th is a prophecy of future things, and not an exhortation to present duty. 'It is certain,' says Mr. Stevens, 'that all the four verbs contained in the 7th verse, are in the *future* tense. Therefore the true and literal reading will be this: *The wicked shall forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; he shall return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*'—See his 'Help for the true Disciples of Immanuel,' Part 2, page 82. I am not aware that this construction has ever been disputed; and if it has not, it suggests with great force of evidence, that such a translation must be rigidly correct. For if such a reading can be established, every shade of support in behalf of possible salvation instantly vanishes. And if it cannot, is it not a little surprising, that those caustic pens which teem with acrimony, and are guided by the feverish hand of spleen, have never been employed in exposing such a destructive mutilation of holy writ. To what point, for instance, can the acumen of the editors of the New Evangelical Magazine been directed? or what can have paralyzed the virulent pen of Mr. Binney? How is it that these 'knights of the quill' should have allowed their genius to slumber? To what cause can their silence be attributed? Is it from the consideration that every opposing idea would be too visionary for the sober durability of Asiatic ink? Conjectures might probably be conceived more vague and unlikely than the one I have hinted. But passing these things, it is by no means improbable that the gentiles are identified by the adjectives *wicked* and *unrighteous*. A designation perfectly understood by the Jews, and in the strictest accordance with the views they entertained of their moral condition. Like Matt. xv. 26. it was descriptive of heathenish or gentile character. The concision of the Jews and the engrafture of the gentiles upon the same stock, were finely contrasted by the prophet and apostle, "if that by any means they might provoke to emulation them which were their flesh, and might save some of them."

4. *The known fact that every natural person is thirsting after natural things.* No person who understands any thing of the human heart, will deny that it contains dispositions which are adapted to the enjoyment of carnal things; and that carnal objects often raise those dispositions to a very feverish tone. But if every natural person is thirsting after carnal things, where is the propriety of addressing them in terms of marked discrimination? And if every natural person does not thirst after carnal things, what reason can be shewn why they should be excluded? If there are offers of mercy in the gospel, why should none but the vilest of carnal men be invited to receive them? Are *moral habits* exemplified in the family and in the world, to place them beyond the inviting hand of mercy? Are those dispositions which parents have been so anxious to cultivate, regulate, fix, and bias,—are those dispositions when exercising their moral and commanding influence over society, when pouring forth their odours to neutralize the obnoxious fumes of lewdness and obscenity, shedding the balm of consolation into the bosom of unrelenting anguish, and elevating the temporal and moral condition of neighbours, society, and mankind at large?—If such persons do not thirst after carnal things, are their superior qualifications and attainments, to displace them from the circle of salvation? What encouragement can this be to virtuous parents? What restraints can it lay upon unsanctified affections? What amiable representations can it make of the divine character? And how can the moral consequences of such sentiments be made to appear? According to this scheme, except every person drink down iniquity as the thirsty ox drinketh down water,—except they relax every bond of obligation and become notoriously vile, they are not to come within the scope of offered mercy! Sin must mature and qualify them for the inviting voice of mercy, as much as grace is to ripen and fit a saint for the enjoyment of bliss!! Talk about antinomianism, cancelling every tie, and dissolving all obligation, why this is antinomianism with a vengeance! But persons must either submit to these consequences, or else desist

from shoring up the incongruous sentiment of general invitations and offered mercy by the 55th of Isaiah.

5. *The nature of the metaphor requires us to understand the invitation as belonging to spiritual characters.* Most people consider, that the allusion is to those places and practices, where ships are unfreighted, their contents exposed for sale, and the inhabitants apprized of the circumstance by the belman or crier; which seem to involve an invitation of extensive advantage. Here we must observe, that the poor, the hungry, and thirsty were invited; the benefit was for them. 2. That there was a strict agreement between their thirst and appetites, and the provision recommended to their notice. 3. There was a triple advantage; there was the article *itself*, the article free from *adulteration*, and to be procured at a *cheaper* rate.

Now if we consider the place referred to, to design the house of God, where free grace is proclaimed by the heralds of mercy, we must suppose, the prophet intended to illustrate the subject of sovereign salvation, and to encourage the gentiles who were interested in them, and who were seeking after them. The figure employed supposes, 1. That they had spiritual dispositions for spiritual blessings, and that those dispositions were gratified by embracing the things to which they related. 2. That the blessings of the gospel were admirably adapted to meet their spiritual dispositions, and to supply all their need. 3. That they were the very individuals to whom the invitations of the gospel were made, and therefore might expect to obtain mercy and find grace to help in every time of need. 4. That by complying with the invitation, there would be a threefold advantage: first, they would find under the ministry of a free grace gospel, not only what they needed, but what in many places they sought for in vain. Every impartial observer must confess that, if in many places an enquiry was made for the substantial truths of the gospel, it would be like enquiring for substantial articles at a London *puff-shop*. An artful tradesman might succeed in persuading many *clever persons*, that they were really the articles for which

they enquired, only they are worked up in another form, (a more fashionable one of course,) manufactured on a more eligible plan, and adapted to more general utility. But should the fraud be detected by here and there one, and the vender of such available articles have in reserve a little spark of honest communication, he would (tapping the unwelcome querist on the shoulder) say, ‘ why to tell the truth between you and me, we do not keep them ; there is no demand for them, there is not indeed. We kept them as long as we could, till we found it would not do. People came and introduced spurious articles in the same street, and almost at the next door ; competition became so general, and the public taste so vitiated, that we were obliged to comply with the deluded spirit of the times, or close our concerns altogether ; and that you know would not do at any price.’ In many places of public worship the gospel never was preached, and in others it is not now as it was in the beginning, which seems to be a sign the case is altered. In many places there is nothing but the monotonous sound of *do, do, do!* There is plenty of work for the dead, and paintings for the blind ; but no “ best robes ” for the naked, no food for the hungry, no drink for the thirsty, nor *strong* drink given to such as are ready to perish, nor wine to such as be of heavy heart. By attending, therefore, a free grace ministry, the very things after which they are hungering, thirsting, and seeking, are discovered, apprehended, and realized, to the joy of their souls.

Secondly, another advantage is, *they will enjoy them in their simple and unmixed state.* “ We are not as *many,* ” said Paul, “ which corrupt the word of God, ” by mixing things that ought to remain separate, as the merchant mixes water with wine ; a dishonest miller chalk with flour ; or any tradesman that may adulterate his articles, or substitute spurious ones for genuine. We have recourse to no such unjust measures, we practice no such schemes ; we imitate no such puffers, we resemble no such impostors. “ But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully ; but by manifesta-

tion of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." They were not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; they brought forward the ancient and sublime doctrines of revelation; they asserted that there was a remnant according to the election of grace; that it was not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy; that they were saved by grace, through faith, and that not of themselves, for it was the gift of God. They retained things in their proper places, preached the gospel in its discriminating properties and abounding fulness, as the glorious gospel of the blessed God; and separating the precious from the vile, they were as God's mouth. Of how many ministers can these things be said in the present day? Of how many may it not be said, "their silver is dross, their wine is mixed with water?" Isaiah i. 22. Their clothing is mixed, being a *linen and woollen* garment, Lev. xix. 19. much unlike the seamless garment—a thing of shreds and patches. Their shoes are old and clouted, and the bread of their provision dry and mouldy, Josh. ix. 5. Their wine bottles are old and rent, and bound up, verse 4. Their grapes are sour, and set the children's teeth on edge, Jer. xxxi. 29. Their waters are mixed, and mixed with mud, Ezek. xxxiv. 18, 19. Their addresses are mixed, and like Ephraim they themselves are mixed among the people, Hos. vii. 8. In addition to this, we see a mixed seed, Ezra ii. 59. and ix. 2.—a mixed multitude, Neh. xiii. 3.—a mixed language, verse 24.—a mixed communion and a mixed creed; *half* orthodox, and *half* heterodox, forming one *whole* paradox. Such a combination of things resemble Nebuchadnezzar's perplexing image, composed of iron *mixed* with miry clay. Dan. ii. 41. Some of the family seem contented with these things in their initial state, but they are unskilful and inexperienced in the word of righteousness, being babes, Heb. v. 13. As their hunger and thirst, however, become more pressing, their minds begin to grow restless, and they find a chasm which all the husks in the world can never fill,—a thirst, which nothing but the well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon, can ever slake.

And such characters are invited to attend the pure preaching of the gospel,—to *hear*, and their souls shall *live* to purpose,—live on all the blessings of the everlasting covenant, even the *sure* (not *offered*) mercies of David.

There is another advantage in attending a free grace gospel, it is this, *the free and sovereign manner in which its blessings are dispensed*. They are to procure these things without money and without price, for they are the *sure* mercies of David; which involve the idea of *freeness*: without being *free*, they would not be *sure*. They are not free because they are sure, but sure because they are free. Their certainty arise out of their freeness, and not their freeness out of their certainty. In the gospel every thing is as free and as sovereign as the rain. And seeing this is the case, wherefore do you spend your time and talents in pursuing unprofitable measures? Hearken to me, listen to my gospel, forsake such legal preaching and practice, and let your souls delight in the pure, precious, profitable, and enriching doctrines of the cross.

Nor was such an invitation useless and unmeaning, if we consider the strong propensity there is in human nature to be a co-worker with God, or if not a co-ordinate, yet a subordinate worker with God; together with the various ties and motives that induce them to remain in legal synagogues. Some have just joined the *class*, others have been just baptized, or just entered into communion without it; while others have continued in the connexion for many years. Others again think they can wear the garb of religion, flounced with respectability; and though they do not expect to walk to heaven in silver slippers, yet they hope to travel in *soft raiment*, and now and then to lodge in *king's palaces*. Thus their minds are deluded and starved, while the gospel in its freeness, fulness, and sovereignty, is disregarded. The love of self and money is the root of all evil.

It will probably be said, that though carnal characters are not addressed in the passage under consideration, yet the metaphor plainly supports the idea of an offer made. For whenever such commodities are *exposed* for sale, they are *offered* for sale, and therefore an offer of

grace must be included. To this I answer, an *offer* and *price* must go together. The price is the condition, and without this the thing cannot be obtained. Faith and repentance are said to be the *price*, or the *terms* on which the offer is made. Now, if the conditions are taken away, the offer must fall to the ground. They are to buy without money and without price ; by which I understand the free, sovereign, and unconditional nature of salvation. And the meaning is, in the ministry of a free grace gospel, salvation is proclaimed to be free, *absolutely free*, adapted to their miseries and exigencies ; suited to meet their needs in every shape ; to hide their nudity, banish their poverty, and accelerate their liberty. And thus entirely opposed to general invitations, offered and uncertain salvation. If, after the remarks I have made, a person can honestly declare, that he can see in a very clear light, general invitations and offered mercy in the passage I have been examining, I can only say the science of optics is but very imperfectly understood.

“ I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God : wherefore turn yourselves and live ye.” Ezek. xviii. 32.

It is thought that there must be a general provision made for mankind, and a general overture or offer made to them ; or else it could not be said, that God had no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, &c. The reader must be aware, that there are several other passages of the same import in the prophecies of Ezekiel ; and if he is familiar with the sacred oracles, he must have observed that those passages are peculiar to Ezekiel. And if he has paid any attention to the chronology of the bible, he must have observed that Ezekiel prophesied to the Jews during their captivity in Babylon. And if an attentive observer of the nature and tendency of men and things, he must have witnessed how men are affected, directed, and instructed, by the action of local circumstances. If he has observed the nature of prophetic imagery, it cannot have escaped his notice, that the images were suggested by surrounding circumstances, passing incidents,

prevailing customs, &c. And that they were adapted to either the then present times, or periods more remote, according to the nature of the prophecies. If he is acquainted with civil things, and is familiar with political phraseology, it must readily occur to his mind, that men are said to be officially and politically dead, when they retire from office, and their official and political influence is suspended. He will also recollect, that when the form of civil government departs from a nation, they may be said to be politically dead. It will also recur to his mind, that great trouble and affliction is sometimes put for death. When these circumstances are recollected, it is thought the passage will be far from affording any support to those ideas they are supposed to involve.

1. *It will be clearly seen, that the controversy between God and Israel was of a civil and political nature.* This the whole chapter plainly proves. Nothing can be more absurd, than to suppose that spiritual and everlasting things are designed.

2. *The ground of the controversy arose from their unjust parable of the sour grapes, and their preferring a charge of injustice against God, on the ground of his having confirmed their captivity in the seed of the aggressors.* Their fathers done the mischief, and they sustained the punishment. This they improved into an argument of gross injustice on the part of God.

3. *It will be seen that the whole of the chapter from verse 3 is directed against this charge, and therefore must have a bearing upon that point.* The affirmation, illustrations, and exhortations, are all related to the same subject. The proverb was concerning the land of Israel, verse 2, which plainly shews that the subject of contention was of a civil and national character. To die or to be dead is to be in great affliction, as 2 Cor. ii. 10. "Who hath delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver;" also chap. ii. 13. "In labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in *deaths* oft." And every person may know by turning to Ezekiel xxxvii. 12, 13. that their afflictions are compared to *death*, and their captivity to graves.

Calvin observes in his commentary, that a corporeal death is principally intended in this chapter, and I have no doubt but bodily suffering is designed. The Jews misrepresented the conduct of God, and charged him with injustice in the face of other nations. Indignant at such a charge, Jehovah declares that for the future his judgments should be so conspicuous and severe, and should be so plainly discovered, that his justice and impartiality must be owned; and that the next generation should have no ground to use such a proverb as that in verse 2. But notwithstanding this, he points out the fallacy of the argument, by shewing his relation *to*, and property *in*, all mankind. The soul of the father was as near to him as the soul of the son, and the soul of the son as the soul of the father; and therefore he could not be more partial to one than another. But the soul that sinneth, whether the father or the son, should *die*;—should be visited in anger with affliction and calamity, and perhaps not live out half his days. Yet nevertheless, though his judgments should be severe and manifest, he would be the staff of the feeble and the shield of the innocent; and although they might talk very tart about the sour grapes, yet the son should escape that affliction and calamity, with which others of an opposite character should be visited. And if the wicked man reformed his conduct and acted consistently, he should save his soul alive;—he should by his good conduct prevent an untimely death. What pleasure, says God, can I have in afflicting you as *creatures*? It is for your sins that these things are come upon you. Think not that I realize a savage satisfaction in bruising you under my feet, without any regard to justice or judgment. So far from it, that it would be more agreeable to my dispensation were you to reform and turn unto me, that you might live in plenty and peace in your own land.

The latter part of the chapter is an exhortation to promote reform. The phrase *turn yourselves*, in verse 30—32. might be, *turn others*, so the margin of the Comprehensive Bible. And it is very observable in

both verses that the plural pronoun is in *italics*. The idea suggested by making them a new heart and a new spirit, is much the same as those suggested by circumcising the foreskin of the heart. And nothing more is intended than a sincere and thorough reformation, both in life and doctrine. There is no necessity either to expunge such passages, or to understand them as relating to spiritual and evangelical things. They form, in connection with other passages, an important history of a peculiar people; and while christians and churches read the whole account, they may *rejoice and tremble*.

They all admit of a consistent interpretation, without embracing the notion of offered grace, &c. For my part I confess, I am in this instance, something like the self-plumed sciolist, who boasted of his illustrating a subject without any difficulty, when it soon appeared that the subject involved none. If we study character, relation, periods, and circumstances, I really cannot think that there is any necessity to conclude that we must either reject them, or embrace offered grace, &c.

Matt. xxiii. 37. “*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not.*”

These words are often quoted with a view of supporting the sentiment into which I am enquiring. It is urged, that the sheltering care of the Redeemer was equally extended to all,—that all had an opportunity of being saved, and therefore all must have had an offer of grace.

In reflecting on the passage, it must appear, that the language is highly *metaphoric*, and therefore must be understood in a figurative sense. And in all such cases, the principal thing to be sought after, is the sentiment intended to be conveyed by the speaker or writer. In order to obtain this, it seems necessary that we should allow the *drift* of the writer or speaker, together with the time, customs, habits, and other circumstances, to

enter into our enquiries; and that we assign to them their respective influence in their different bearings on the point in question.

The design of our Lord in this place was, *to point out the destruction of the Jewish nation for their rejection of him as the promised Messiah.* To express his affection to, and his concern *for*, the seed of Abraham, no figure could be better employed, no language more affecting, than what was used by him who spake as never man spake. By this metaphor, he also pointed out the calamity that would befall them, the hand that should effect their desolation, the feeble resistance which they would make, and his anxiety to preserve them from spoilation and ruin.

The affection of Christ to the Jews. The attachment of the hen to her feathered family, is so striking as to become proverbial.

“ Beneath her fostering wings the *hen* defends
Her darling offspring, while the snow descends;
And through the winter’s day unmov’d, defies
The chilling fleeces, and inclement skies;
Till vanquish’d by the cold and piercing blast,
True to her charge, she perishes at last.”

It seems almost impossible that our Lord could have represented his affection for the Jewish people by a metaphor more familiar, striking, or interesting.

Their calamities. When the covering care of the hen is wanted, the exposure of the brood is manifest and perilous. And when the fostering and surrounding attention of Jehovah is withdrawn from a people, their situation is awfully alarming. It is with the most sublime feeling that we learn the protection of God is compared to outstretched wings; and with peculiar interest we mark the privilege of the good man, who dwelling in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide *under the shadow* of the Almighty. The promise of protection involves his security—“ he shall *cover thee with his feathers*, and *under his wings*, shalt thou trust, his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.” Ps. xci. But when the wings of safety are withdrawn, there is no security against the eagle that hasteneth to the prey. Job ix. 26. Even Jacob shall become a prey and a

spoil to their enemies. 2 Kings xxiv. 14. They are for a prey and none delivereth. Isaiah xlii. 22.

The hand or power that should effect their desolation. The gathering of them under his wings, doubtless suggested their danger from the Roman power, the representation of which was an *eagle*; and which continued to the times of Constantine, when it was exchanged by him for the sign of the cross—the *symbol of safety and conquest*.

When therefore the Roman legions were advancing for hostile operations, their ensigns on which were engraven or painted golden eagles, while floating and buoyant in the air, could not fail to suggest the idea of an eagle hovering in the atmosphere, and waiting to fall upon its prey.

The same thought is inculcated in Matt. xxiv. 28. The Jews were *judicially* and *morally* dead; their system of policy was exanimate and hastening to decomposition, while their moral feeling was enervated, perverted, and destroyed. And the sense is, wherever there are Jews who have dealt unfaithfully with God, rejected his authority, and crucified his Son, there should the destroying Romans be gathered together. And probably there was not a *carious* Jew but met with a *furious* foe. *Every carcass had its eagle*, so exactly was the prophecy of their generous prophet fulfilled in Num. xxxii. 23. “*Be sure your sin will find you out.*”

The feeble and unsuccessful resistance which they should make. They could no more resist the overwhelming force of the Romans, than a distracted and unprotected brood of chickens could resist the talloned eagle or elude the vulture’s eye. It is true their city was well fortified both by nature and art; and well supplied with provision, insomuch that Josephus asserts they could never have been taken, had they not have prepared the way by imprudent measures. But when God leaves a people, counsellors are led away spoiled, and judges become fools. Job xii. 17. The line of confusion and the stones of emptiness are stretched over the city. Isaiah xxxiv. 11. So that in drinking of the cup of wrath, they are moved and mad. Jer. xxv.